(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) to (c) Licences granted for operation of Basic Service in 1997-98 to six private companies stipulated provision of village Public telephones (VPTs) in 97,806 villages as a part of roll out obligation. All of them were not able to fulfill their obligations in the stipulated time frame. Liquidated Damages amounting to Rs. 53.75 crores were recovered from private Basic Service Operators for delay in commencement of service and delay in provisioning of VPTs and Direct Exchange Lines (DELs). The licence also stipulated that in case of VPT is provided by Department of Telecommunications (Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. as successor organization), the said roll out shall be treated as fulfilled. Accordingly, in the absence of commencement of service by the private Basic Service Operators or non availability of the network of Private Basic Service Operator in that area, the Department of Telecommunications had provided VPTs. It may not be correct to draw a conclusion that Department spent more than Rs. 90 crores on behalf of private operators or private operators were given undue benefit amounting to Rs. 719 crores.

Telephone rental in Gautam Budh Nagar

†1716. SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for recovery of Rs. 220/- as rental on telephones installed in 123 villages of District Gautam Budh Nagar in spite of announcement made by G.M., Telephones, Noida that such rental should be to the tune of Rs. 110/-;

(b) the reasons for *suo motu* increase and decrease in the rental by G.M., Telephones, Noida from time to time;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) the reasons for non-compliance of prescribed rules and rentals issued through the communiques by G.M., Telephones, Noida; and

(d) the reasons for charging different rentals in different exchanges falling under the same SDCA?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) Rental @ Rs., 220 per month is not being recovered. Actually, the rate of rental is Rs. 210 per month for those villages of the District Gautam Budh Nagar, which fall within the Local Area of Noida Telephone System (NTS), and Rs. 110 per month for those outside the said Local Area. However, from 1.5.2003, an Economy Plan has also been introduced, for the subscribers in the villages falling with the NTS, under which a lower rental of Rs. 150 per month is payable.

(b) and (c) Rentals were revised, as per extant norms and rules, owing to increased exchange capacity and also when certain areas were reclassified as urban or rural according to the latest Census Report of 2001.

(d) Different rentals are being charged, even within the same SDCA, depending upon the exchange capacity, classification of an area as rural or urban, and the capacity of the Exchange System.

Telephones by private telecom operators

1717. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether private telecom operators do not generally come forward to lay telephone lines and provide mobile or land-line telephone facilities in rural areas in remote and backward districts and are subjected to penalties for avoiding villages;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and